

# Senator Eliot Shapleigh

## CAPITOL REVIEW

Fall 2007



*“Fighting for our children,  
our community and our future”*

*– Senator Eliot Shapleigh*

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**Dear Friend:**

### **Our Children, Our Community, Our Future**

For generations, public service has been the “highest calling” in my family. Serving you for the past ten years has been a humbling and wonderful experience. I believe that the next ten years will be the “golden era” of El Paso. Our children, our community, our future are worth the fight!

Right now, El Paso is on the path toward many historical accomplishments. We are building El Paso’s Four-Year Medical School and the Medical Center of the Americas. Ft. Bliss is growing. Downtown is on its way to new life. El Paso’s Regional Mobility Authority gives us options to fund our transportation future. More than any time in our lifetimes, El Paso is the best place to me.

In the 80th Texas Legislature, we accomplished many important goals, worked to stop bad bills, and won full funding for our medical school. This session was one of our best. In this edition of Capitol Review, we are highlighting just a few of our legislative accomplishments for you. We are also working on special projects right here, in El Paso—Mission Valley License Plates, the Soccer Project, and the Franklin Mountain Park Strategic Plan, just to name a few.

Please enjoy this edition of Capitol Review. During this holiday season, we have many reasons to give thanks!

Very Truly Yours,

*Eliot Shapleigh*

Eliot Shapleigh

# EL PASO MEDICAL SCHOOL GETS FUNDED

By Senator Eliot Shapleigh

We first started dreaming about a medical school in Unite El Paso in 1992. More than any endeavor, a four-year medical school in El Paso will build new, high-paying jobs and give us a solid foundation for a prosperous future.



This past session, the 80th Texas Legislature included \$48 million for first and second year faculty at El Paso's medical school.

Even before first taking office in 1997, we spearheaded El Paso's effort to build a four-year medical school. During Unite El Paso, 1,200 of us gathered in the Civic Center to craft a consensus vision for a new more prosperous El Paso. To launch that vision, we defined a goal of a four-year medical school as the anchor of a Medical Center of the Americas. That's when we first started the serious work of brining a medical school to El Paso.

In 1998, following Judge Marquez' Court of Inquiry on inequitable state funding of El Paso's transportation infrastructure, we, along with Ray Caballero, Woody Hunt, Jose Rodriguez and Robert Brown, began working with Texas Tech Chancellor John Montford to give El Paso more autonomy in shaping health-care issues and to increase investment in the TTUHSC-El Paso campus.

That year, we also traveled to Washington D.C. to create an El Paso Empowerment Zone, with the medical school as the center piece; and we worked to organize El Paso's first Economic Summit, with a central vision around a medical school as the anchor of a unified medical center. Across the Southwest, in San Antonio, Dallas and Houston, medical centers create solid, high-paying jobs.

In July 1998, we also joined with Texas Comptroller John Sharp to identify and explore major opportunities and challenges along the U.S.-Mexico Border Region. "Whoever builds a first-class medical center, and the logical place for that is going to be El Paso, is going to create one heck of a gold mine," Comptroller Sharp said.

The next year, during the 76th Texas Legislature, our office fought for a \$50 million appropriation from tobacco funds to establish a research endowment for the medical school, which included \$25 million for UTEP and \$25 million for Texas Tech.

"The case for the Border Health Institute in El Paso is clear," I wrote in the El Paso Times on April 13, 2000. "With 2.4 million people in the Paso Del Norte metroplex (El Paso-Juárez-Southern New Mexico), and some of the most complex health issues in North America, we desperately need a campus dedicated to health education and research."

At the time, others argued against a new medical campus in El Paso, advocating in its place the creation of an Internet website.

During the 77th Texas Legislature, in 2001, we established the foundations for El Paso's medical school. With El Paso's legislative delegation, we fought to win approval of a \$40 million research tower, \$3 million for development and planning, and \$600,000 for Texas Tech's El Paso Diabetes Research Center.

"We are already about halfway to completing a four-year medical school," Texas Tech Chancellor Montford told the El Paso Times following that session.

In 2003, during the 78th Texas Legislature, with a \$10 billion budget shortfall, we worked to grant Texas Tech authority to start curriculum design and development for the four-year medical school.

Working with Senator Duncan (R-Lubbock), a rider was adopted to grant TTUHSC-El Paso the authority to take the organizational and procedural steps necessary to attain accreditation

of the school. In effect, this rider granted authority for a full four-year medical school in El Paso.

Later that year, during the 78th Third Special Session, after hard work by our office to craft rider language, Perry signed H.B. 28 authorizing Texas Tech to sell \$45 million in tuition revenue bonds to build additional classroom facilities. In 2006, Perry signed H.B. 153, passed in the 79th Third Special Session, authorizing an additional \$6.3 million in tuition revenue bonds for the school.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the medical school facilities was held December 1, 2005; and a "topping-off" ceremony for the medical education building was held in El Paso on September 8, 2006.

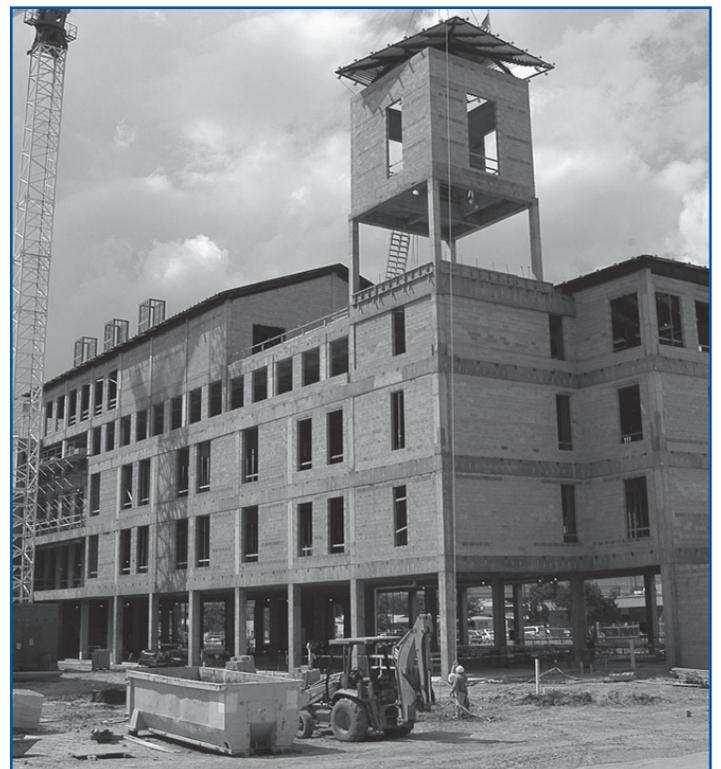
In recent months, we have also worked with the Paso del Norte Group and City of El Paso to fund a \$500,000 Medical Center of the Americas (MCA) development study. The study would provide goals, timelines and a solid development plan for a broader MCA concept. In San Antonio, the health cluster is the number one job creation engine. In Houston, 80,000 people go to work everyday at the Texas Medical Center.

With the \$48 million appropriated in 2007 for first and second year faculty at the medical school, the first phase of development is completed and full accreditation is now possible. The first class is expected to enter in 2009.

The facilities for El Paso's medical school at Texas Tech University are located adjacent to Thomason Hospital and the Texas Tech complex, and next door to the offices of the City-County Health and Environmental District. The site is also near the Silva Magnet High School in El Paso Independent School District. Already, nearly 4,000 people work at our medical center, with many more to come.

A 2005 impact study for Texas Tech indicates that the El Paso medical school will trigger \$1.5 billion in economic activity. Much of the activity will be generated from equipment, supplies and spin-off industries involving medical research. Before El Paso's medical school, Texas had not created a medical school in 30 years. The school at Texas Tech is the state's ninth medical school.

With the medical school, Ft. Bliss, a regional mobility authority and downtown revitalization, we are creating a solid foundation for a new more prosperous El Paso. Right now, El Paso is the place to be!



# FIGHTING FOR US IN AUSTIN

I am very humbled to serve El Paso. Our office has worked harder, passed more legislation, and spearheaded more key initiatives than any of us could have imagined a decade ago. We are proud of that record. While we may have challenges, I am confident about our future.

We believe in great schools, a first-class university, our medical campus, a quality healthcare system, sustainable water, public safety, and meeting our infrastructure demands, especially related to flooding. Together, we can truly make these next ten years the “golden era” of El Paso’s history.

Here is a list of some of our accomplishments, state and local, of which you may be aware:

### Higher Education

- Supported key provisions in the area of higher education under H.B. 1, including increased funding for UTEP by 17.82 percent with an appropriation of \$166 million; increased funding for Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center by 33.74 percent with an appropriation of \$352 million; and, adding Cancer Research as a special item for Texas Tech University HSC (\$4.8 million).
- Secured \$48 million in funding to hire first and second-year faculty for the Texas Tech El Paso Medical School.

### Public Education

- Supported key provisions in H.B. 1, increasing the State’s contribution to the Teacher Retirement System from 6.0 percent to 6.58 percent (\$645 million) and authorizing an increase in teacher contributions, making possible a 13th check paid to retirees. H.B. 1 also appropriates \$285 million to provide all Texas teachers with a \$430 pay raise for each of the next two years, and \$100 million for a new scholarship program for Top 10% students.
- Passed H.B. 1609 to further improve our most successful dropout prevention program, Communities in Schools (CIS). H.B. 1609, targets dropout prevention by expanding the Student Success Initiative to the 8th grade and funding teacher academies to the tune of \$42.1 million for the biennium.
- Sponsored H.B. 2814, which appropriates \$4 million for a dual-language pilot program in no more than 30 campuses at 10 school districts across the state, to ensure our state leads the way in a multi-language world. Independent studies of dual language programs have shown that dual language is the best method in which to close the achievement gap between English learners and English speakers. Dual language programs also experience lower dropout rates than other bilingual education programs.

### Health and Human Services

- Co-sponsored H.B. 109, which covers as many as 127,000 more uninsured children through the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). About 11,000 El Paso children have lost their CHIP coverage since budget cuts in 2003.
- Co-sponsored H.B. 14, the enabling legislation for H.J.R. 90, which will send a proposal to the voters to fund \$3 billion in bonds for cancer research.



- Worked on key provisions in H.B. 1, which includes \$706 million to settle Frew v. Hawkins, increasing reimbursement rates by 25 percent for doctors who see children on Medicaid, and increasing reimbursement rates by 50 percent. H.B. 1, also addresses U.S. Department of Justice findings at the Lubbock State School with \$49 million to meet staffing ratio requirements and to integrate 250 state school consumers into the HCS Program for the biennium.
- Passed H.B. 1168, which regulates lodge homes for mentally ill, disabled and elderly Texans. The pilot program was previously established for registration, licensing and oversight of this category of residential homes. The legislation expands and makes the pilot program permanent and statewide.

### Ft. Bliss and BRAC

- Passed S.B. 962 which helps build the fourteen new schools that troops and families will need. The bill reduces a school district’s wealth per student by 25 percent for instructional facilities allotment (IFA) purposes if the district must construct, acquire, renovate, or improve an instructional facility as a result of incoming BRAC students. With a \$4.9 million budget allocation, S.B. 962 will help BRAC-impacted school districts secure the IFA funding necessary to properly serve the children of military personnel transferring due to BRAC.
- Passed S.B. 1912 which assists teachers moving into the community as a result of BRAC. Texas law provides for a one-year temporary teaching certificate for teachers to use while the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) determines what tests the teacher must take to be certified in Texas. The bill will extend the temporary certification period for one year past the date that SBEC informs the teacher of the required tests to ensure that teachers in BRAC-impacted districts have an adequate time in which to comply with SBEC’s testing requirements.
- Amended H.B. 3107 to recreate statutorily the Veterans’ Assistance Fund. A contingency rider in H.B. 1, appropriated \$2 million into the Fund to help our state’s veterans with costs associated with transportation to medical care, surgery and treatment.
- Co-authored S.B. 685 which exempts mandatory fees, in addition to tuition, for members of the Texas Military Forces attending institutions of higher education for up to 12 credit hours per semester through the Texas National Guard Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).



## State Senator Eliot Shapleigh

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### Parks, Water and Floods

- Passed, S.B. 688 to assist the city with creating storm water districts, which manage and control storm water drainage.
- Filed S.B. 1588 and amended its provisions into S.B. 3 to ensure that counties adopt regulations for flood plain management that are not less stringent than those set forth by the National Flood Insurance Program, and provide for the imposition of penalties on landowners that are in violation of such measures.
- Passed S.B. 1762 which requires the Texas Water Development Board, in coordination with the Far West Texas Water Planning Group, to conduct a study on the impact of climate change on surface water. The bill also requires the board to submit a written report regarding its findings to the legislature.
- Strongly supported a key provision on H.B. 1 that increased our State parks funding, currently ranked 49th nationwide, by 75 percent, for a total \$171.7 million and appropriated \$47.7 million for state local parks grants. With this appropriation, it will be possible to invest \$500,000 in the creation of a visitors center that will help engage and teach our community on the history and splendor that is the Franklin Mountain State Park. The city's master plan locates the center on the Northeast side of the Franklin Mountains.
- Worked closely with the Public Service Board (PSB), and the City of El Paso, to add approximately 1,850 acres of

land to the Franklin Mountain State Park (1,600 acres in Northeast El Paso and 200 acres in West El Paso). With this expansion come new trailheads, allowing the El Paso community and the thousands of visitors from all over the country each year, better access to the park.

### Public Safety

- Sponsored H.B. 1355 to increase the penalty to a state jail felony for an owner of a dangerous dog that is not secured properly (roaming loosely off their property) and makes an unprovoked attack that causes serious bodily injury. In the event that such an attack causes the victim's death, the penalty is increased to a second degree felony.
- Passed H.B. 4008 which adds two additional county criminal courts at law in El Paso, County Criminal Courts at Law No. 3 and No. 4.
- Amended S.B. 1951 to create the 448th District Court and the El Paso County Criminal District No.1 to focus on felony drug cases.

### Border Crossing

- Filed S.B. 2027, and later amended S.B. 11 to authorize the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to initiate a pilot program similar to one enacted recently in Washington under which DPS would issue an enhanced driver's license for individuals who apply for one. The enhanced driver's license will look much like a conventional driver's license, but will also include proof of citizenship and other information that can easily be scanned at border ports-of-entry.

# HOW TO CONTACT

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